

Give President Wilson a Democratic Congress

THE FLAG

"Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war."

[An address delivered at Baltimore, Md., September 12, 1914, by Mr. Bryan, at the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the writing of "The Star Spangled Banner" by Francis Scott Key.]

"Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: I share the profound regret which you all feel that the president could not participate in these exercises, and I appreciate the honor of acting as his representative on this historic occasion. He bids me convey to you his greetings and good will. I am sure that if he were here he would carry to the end of life, as we shall, the impression made by the living flag in which 6,000 of your school children are taking part.

"You do well to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the writing of the national anthem by Maryland's illustrious son, Francis Scott Key. The Star-Spangled Banner stands out conspicuously among the tributes to the nation's flag. While the genius of the author finds expression in the brilliancy of its phraseology, the fervent spirit which pervades it is the product of the circumstances which brought it forth. The agonizing suspense and the anxious longing of the captive were molded into stirring sentences that can not fail to call forth a response from every loyal heart.

"I shall find my text for today in the line with which the poet closed each stanza — the line which makes immortal the poem in which both his mind and his heart are mirrored. Our starry banner, representing an indissoluble union of indestructible states, beautiful as it is to the eye — and there is none more beautiful — derives its real splendor from the fact that it floats 'O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.' The words describe a political condition and the virtues of a people. We know for what the flag stood when it was first unfurled and with what courage it has been defended. We might, without exhausting our theme, occupy this hour in thanksgiving for all that has been achieved under the red, white, and blue, and in praise of those who have won for it love at home and respect abroad. But, gratifying as that would be, more advantage can be gained from contemplation of the part which we must play today and tomorrow in determining what that flag shall symbolize. What kind of freedom shall it represent to the world? And for what sort of bravery shall it stand?

"The world has longed for freedom throughout the ages — the world, made up not of the privileged few but of the countless multitude. Some of the people have at all times had freedom, often more than they have wisely used. A few in every age have not only had undisputed control of themselves and of their resources, but have profited by the limitations which they have imposed upon those who were unable to successfully resist them. This 'freedom of the few,' being a selfish enjoyment, usually hardened the hearts of those who possessed it, and made them blind to the injustice which they wrought, and deaf to the protests which their cruelties aroused. Having a monopoly of political rights, they added to it a monopoly of physical happiness and intellectual progress. They even fettered the conscience of man and prescribed the forms through which he might satisfy the universal longing for communion with the Infinite. This freedom, resting not upon respect for human rights but upon the power of might, degraded those who exercised it, while it wronged those to whom it was denied.

"And bravery was not lacking then — the bravery of the conqueror who risked his life to secure the authority that he coveted. But the freedom of the despot and the bravery of the tyrant are not the virtues of which Key sang.

It required a higher form of both freedom and bravery to thrill the heart of the poet and to suggest to him the word pictures which he wove into his lines. The masses have gradually won their way to a freer air and to a larger liberty, but every inch of the ground has been contested. At times the light seemed to break and the heart of man beat faster at the prospect of achieving the freedom which he sought, and many a noble life was yielded up in part payment for the liberty which we now possess. Long before Columbus turned the prows of his adventurous ships toward the west, substantial progress had been made, but it was reserved for our forefathers to lay upon the soil of a new continent the foundation of institutions dedicated to the doctrine that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights; that governments are instituted among men to secure these rights and derive their just powers from the consent of the people. It was a bold — it seemed even almost a rash — undertaking, but the enterprise has succeeded beyond the dreams of the pioneers. Here in the western hemisphere, unhampered by traditions and unrestrained by custom and conventionality, the early settlers of America formulated a system of government which has become the model of the world. In the fullness of time they achieved their independence, and following their example, other colonies assumed control of their political destiny. Our constitution has become the pattern, copied by other nations, and the success of our experiment in self-government has answered all the arguments formerly advanced in behalf of arbitrary power. The triumphant democracy of the new world has stimulated the friends of liberty in the older countries to continued advances until we see everywhere increasing limitations placed upon monarchical authority, everywhere the waning of hereditary power.

"Accompanying the development of freedom has come a change in the type of courage which man has manifested. There has been a constant growth in the spirit of fraternity — an increasing tendency among men to unite their efforts in defense of common rights and in the advancement of the common good. It is in this period that our people have lived, since our nation, born in the revolutionary struggle, entered upon its superb career. During these years the flag has been 'gallantly streaming,' sometimes in 'the rocket's red glare,' and son has imitated sire in willingness to die, if necessary, to maintain the authority for which it stands. But the war era has ended in the United States and is drawing toward its close in foreign lands; the convulsions through which Europe is now passing are but the death throes of militarism.

"The awful cost of this war in life and treasure, and its distressing aftermath of sorrow and regret, will teach the folly of wasting the people's substance in preparation for wars that should never come, and it ought also to hasten the day when all the nations will agree among themselves that there shall be no resort to arms until time has been given for passions to subside and for an investigation of the questions in dispute.

"We are entering an age in which freedom will be given new interpretations and bravery find new forms of expression. The doctrine of the divine right of kings has been discarded, but it has been discarded to no purpose if the divine right of man does not lead to man's elevation. Man has become his own master, not that he may be brutish or brutal, but that he may be free to develop the best that is in him and to aspire to all the heights that the Heavenly father has put within his reach. And no matter how high he rises or upon how lofty a plane he plans his life, the flag will still wave above him, for the stars and stripes stand for the triumphs of peace as well as for victories upon the battle field.

"The theoretical anarchist deludes himself with the belief that man will have no need of government when he becomes a 'law unto himself,' but he comprehends but a part of the problem. The coercive part of government will diminish as civilization advances; even now a large proportion of the people have no need of the 'thou shalt nots' of the criminal law. But while the restraints of the statutes may be expected to fall into disuse because unnecessary, the co-operative part of government is ever in-

creasing. The people find it economical to do together, through the instrumentalities of organized government, what they could not do so cheaply, if at all, by individual effort. A thousand men can do more than a thousand times as much as one man; they can do what no one of the thousand, working by himself, would ever think of undertaking. Take for instance, the canal just completed across the Isthmus of Panama. If the entire population of the globe had walked single file across the Isthmus it would never have occurred to any one of them to undertake alone the construction of the canal, but when 40,000 laborers unite their efforts under the guidance of competent engineers the task is completed and the nations behold the oceans joined. This union of effort is impossible without mutual confidence, and confidence is impossible without breadth of sympathy. The freedom of the future will bring the substantial satisfaction that comes from voluntary acts of helpfulness — the joy that is to be found in the willing bearing of the joint burdens.

"Let no one think that the texture of our manhood will be of a lower quality when its strength is no longer tested by stress of war. We could not worship God as we do if we were convinced that each generation must be exercised in blood-letting in order to prevent stagnation. There is as much inspiration in a noble life as in an heroic death. With peaceful progress the avenues of usefulness are being multiplied; instead of seeking to extend our territory by the sword, we are enlarging it by intelligent cultivation of the soil; instead of measuring our merit by the numbers we can overcome, we estimate greatness by the service rendered.

"It is some 3,000 years since Solomon declared that 'he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city,' and yet the world is just now coming to understand this truth. In the day that is dawning the bravery of self-restraint will take the place of that bravery which tramples upon the rights of others; man will dare to forgive and leave vengeance to the Lord.

"Society needs today, and will ever need, the moral courage that he must have who proves the right by standing for it, come what may, until his example has emboldened weaker spirits to share the risk with him. There are wrongs to be righted and abuses to be remedied, not by violence but by the inherent power of truth to propagate itself. Brave men are needed in every community throughout the land, and brave women, too, for man has made progress in proportion as he has recognized woman's right to share with his responsibility for the shaping of the conditions under which both shall live. They have been linked together by indissoluble ties and made cotenants of the home — earth's only paradise.

"Let us address ourselves, then, to the unfinished work which preceding generations have bequeathed to us, determined to be worthy of the inheritance which we enjoy. Freely we have received, freely must we give. Our nation is the heir of the ages; all the garnered riches of past experience are ours; we will be false to every obligation if we falter or fall short in the performance of the duties that descend to us.

"Hail! Flag of the free and the brave — priceless legacy from the fathers, baptized in their priceless blood. Thy commingled hues speak to us of their sacrifices, the purity of their purpose, and their constancy. May the sacred memories invoked by thy presence compel us to thoughts and words and deeds in harmony with theirs.

"Be our country's ensign still — and more. As the world is drawn closer together in the bonds of a universal brotherhood, may thy colors stimulate the struggling, hoping hosts of man to the impulses that are noblest, to the service that is largest, and to the achievements that are most enduring as in friendly rivalry they advance through each generation to higher ground."

The admitted fact that in every state democratic success is predicated upon the strength of the Wilson administration with the people, is the greatest possible proof of the real value it has been to the nation. Politicians are canny folks, and they do not hitch their wagons to dimming stars.